

*Remarks of Diane Marinaro  
Teacher/Union President  
Hamden  
Before the Education Committee  
On Senate Bill 24, Section 33  
Superintendent Certificate Waiver  
February 21, 2012*

Good afternoon Senator Stillman and Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee.

My name is Diane Marinaro, and I am a Social Studies teacher in Hamden. I am here today to comment on Senate Bill 24, Section 33. As a teacher, union president, former board of education member/chairperson I feel qualified to comment on the proposal to waive a Superintendent's Certification. I believe this proposal should not be approved for many reasons. From my numerous experiences, a superintendent must understand and articulate the complexities involved in a school district. Someone who has no experience and insight into the social, emotional, academic and diverse needs of students can not possibly comprehend the educational challenges facing us today.

Speaking as a former board chair it is important to note that most board members come from non-education backgrounds. A Board of Education looks to a Superintendent to be their educational leader – to propose the goals and objectives, policies and curriculum needed in the school system. A board recognizes that there is a business manager to handle the business/finance matters of the district and requires a Superintendent to administer the educational components for the district. A Superintendent must not only possess the knowledge but must have obtained the educational skill set required to lead a school district. He/she must have experienced the daily workings of a classroom to better relate to issues of concern and to guide the district forward.

As a teacher, we expect our educational leader to have had experience in the classroom, who knows what a classroom is and what "good teaching" is all about. We expect that the Superintendent demand high expectations for him/herself and will be accountable, as teachers are every minute of every day. A Superintendent must be cognizant of curriculum, standards for education, and the changing educational system and be able to convey this information to the staff and public. He/she must be articulate and able to analyze and explain test results and plan proactive measures/strategies to enhance learning in meeting the achievement gap. A Superintendent, upon visiting a classroom must be able to connect with the "teaching" and to the "learners," even to the extent of participating in a lesson. The Superintendent must recognize the components of a lesson, thoroughly understand the curriculum being taught in the district and must have previous experience in teaching curriculum. The Superintendent must understand objectives and goal setting. A teacher

is expected to be certified to teach, a Superintendent must be certified to lead. To expect a non-certified individual to be able to fill the role of such magnitude with no educational experience is unfathomable.

As a union president, I work in a district where there is communication, collaboration and mutual respect between the teachers and administration. When issues arise I can talk to the Superintendent and she can understand and relate to what I am saying because she has been in the classroom as a teacher and is certified to be in her present position. I expect to have deep conversations with my Superintendent regarding educational issues and come up with solutions that meet everyone's needs. The mind set of a Superintendent is different from that of other professions. Their mind set, as it should be, is all about education. The Superintendents I know have spent their life in the field of education. Personally, I could not walk into a business office or attempt to oversee a job (outside of education) that I could not understand or with which I have not had any experience. I wouldn't expect to go to a doctor or lawyer who is not certified in his/her practice- I would not expect to work with a Superintendent who is not certified in education.

Senate Bill 24 that you have in front of you is not a "magic bullet" and I believe that is what the governor intends it to be. The achievement gap and other challenges we are facing in education today will not be solved by passing this Bill. There is nothing "magical" about it and it will only help to crumble the educational foundation we presently have. One definition of "reform" is "to put or change into an improved form or condition." Education can be reformed when you look to the knowledge and expertise of the people who are the educators to help to carve out ideas and strategies, to build a framework for reform that will truly be positive, constructive and beneficial – not by looking to individuals with personal agendas and no knowledge of what they are trying to "reform."

I urge the committee to not consider the proposal to waive a Superintendent's certification and to not approve Senate Bill 24. Thank you for your consideration.

Diane M. Marinaro, President  
Hamden Education Association